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ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the commodification and politicisation of cultural heritage using as a case study the ongoing debate on the return of the Parthenon Marbles from the UK to Greece. Greece has been in the throes of a severe financial crisis for over six years with the ever imminent threat of Grexit, leaving or staying in the Eurozone, constantly disputed. In parallel with this ongoing turmoil, discourses in the media concerning Greek antiquity have been persistently prominent within and without the country. In this context, the paper aims to problematise the complex nexus of relationships between the financial crisis, national identity and cultural heritage.

We combine the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) and Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS) and apply our framework to the controversy surrounding the Parthenon Marbles reignited by the press release for the movie 'The Monuments Men' in 2014. The paper draws on data from an online forum and investigates how the users negotiate pro-/anti-return positions and make the financial crisis relevant in the argumentation process.

The intricate and incestuous relationship between heritage and national identity becomes more intense and contentious in times of crisis. The analysis of the data shows that history, identity, value, and debt are recontextualised in relation to the Parthenon sculptures. The analysis identifies an underlying process of value *trade off* and brings the current political and economic environment to the fore. We close the paper by foregrounding the implications of our study and provide directions for further research.

Το άρθρο αυτό αποσκοπεί να ανιχνεύσει χαρακτηριστικά εμπορευματοποίησης και πολιτικοποίησης της Ελληνικής πολιτιστικής κληρονομιάς εξετάζοντας το debate γύρω από την επιστροφή των μαρμάρων του Παρθενώνα από το Ηνωμένο Βασίλειο στην Ελλάδα.

Θέματα αναφορικά με τη σημασία της ελληνικής αρχαιότητας επανέρχονται στο προσκήνιο και καταλαμβάνουν σημαντική θέση στον ελληνικό και διεθνή τύπο στο πλαίσιο της δριμείας οικονομικής κρίσης που ταλαιπωρεί την ελληνική κοινωνία για περισσότερα από έξι έτη και ενώ η απειλή του Grexit, η έξοδος της χώρας από την Ευρωζώνη, παραμένει επίκαιρη.

Επιχειρείται εδώ η καταγραφή των πολύπλευρων συσχετισμών μεταξύ οικονομικής κρίσης, εθνικής ταυτότητας και πολιτιστικής κληρονομιάς. Συνδυάζουμε το Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) και το Interactional Sociolonguistics (IS) και εξετάζουμε την επανα-επικαιροποιημένη συζήτηση γύρω από τα μάρμαρα του Παρθενώνα που ακολούθησε το δελτίο τύπου της ταινίας 'The Monuments Men' το 2014.

Το υλικό της ανάλυσής αντλήθηκε από ένα διαδυκτιακό forum και η μελέτη αφορά στον τρόπο με τον οποίο απόψεις υπερ/κατά της επιστροφής των μαρμάρων συνδέονται με την οικονομική κρίση στην επιχειρηματολογία των χρηστών. Το θεωρητικό πλαίσιο της έρευνας διαμορφώνεται από τις έννοιες της πολιτιστικής κληρονομιάς και της εθνικής ταυτότητας, έννοιες αλληλένδετες, ιδιαίτερα σε καιρούς κρίσης.

Η ανάλυση των δεδομένων αποσκοπεί στη διερεύνηση διαφόρων εκφάνσεων πολιτιστικής κληρονομιάς και στην ανάδειξη του τρόπου με τον οποίο η ιστορία, η εθνική ταυτότητα και το χρέος επαναπροσδιορίζονται σε σχέση με τα μάρμαρα του Παρθενώνα. Τα αποτελέσματα της ανάλυσης δείχνουν μια διαδικασία επαναδιαπραγμάτευσης υλικών και κοινωνικο-πολιτιστικών αξιών και φέρνουν στο προσκήνιο την υπάρχουσα πολιτική και οικονομική κατάσταση. Η εργασία ολοκληρώνεται με προτάσεις για περαιτέρω έρευνα.

Keywords: Heritage, discourse, online communities, commodification, crisis,

Parthenon Marbles, DHA/IS

Word count: 11652

Introduction[i]

Greece has been hit by a financial crisis which has severely affected the living standards of the population. Since the mid- to late 2000s Greece has teetered on the brink of default several times (2010; 2014; most recently June 2015) and the latest developments (2016) have seen Greece once more on the verge of Grexit. Over the past 6 years both New Democracy (former) and Syriza-Anel (current) governments have implemented serial Draconian austerity measures and acceded to universally unpopular structural reforms to remain eligible to receive funds from the European Union (EU) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to maintain liquidity. However, despite promises from politicians that the pain involved was the necessary road to salvation, the measures have roved largely fruitless, and the deficit has inexorably grown since the beginning of the crisis (from 109,4% of GDP to 178,6% in 2014 and 176,9% in 2015, ELSTAT 2015, EUROSTAT 2016). Whatever optimism existed has evaporated; to be replaced by uncertainty and incipient despondency in official and everyday discourses. Outside the country, anti-Greek sentiment spread in international media (particularly from 2010-2014), and the associated pejorative attributes have contributed to an ambient negative public opinion of a 'corrupt' and 'lazy' country and people (see Wodak and Angouri, 2014 for different case studies).

In this context, discourses of a 'glorious' past have become particularly prominent in the Greek media and in public discourses. The foregrounding of the significance of Greek heritage for global (and particularly European) civilisation as a strategy for counteracting the negative national image is evident. Narratives and symbols from ancient Greek history and mythology proliferate and are exploited for national consumption – as with extreme right parties (and notably the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn)

or are mobilised by international media for indexing support or blame (e.g. the image of Aphrodite of Milo on magazines, Spiegel, 20 April 2011).

Against this backdrop, this paper taps into the complexity of everyday political discourse in mediated public spheres. 'Crisis' and 'normality' have become tautological in Greece; discourses about heritage and crises overlap and political discourse has become normalised as small talk. People seek to position themselves on matters directly concerning their daily realities, and in so doing seek to rationalise a rapidly changing political and economic environment. Heritage discourse is not necessarily political, but the recontextualisation of symbols to (re)negotiate a positive national identity in the current context, clearly is. National identity is understood here as a construct built on an imaginary of homogeneity and belonging using essentialised common-sense inferences of symbols, conventions and simplified representations of the nation (Billig 1995). This contributes to a 'national habitus' (Wodak 2015) which in turn furnishes a resource for positioning in space and time. We discuss this further in relation to heritage symbolism below.

We draw on the debate on the return of the Parthenon Marbles to Greece from the British Museum as a case study. The return negotiations have a long history and pro-return campaigns have resurfaced at different times and historical and political circumstances. The debate has recently reignited in the aftermath of a successful Hollywood film, 'The Monuments Men'. The Columbia Pictures film, directed by George Clooney and written and produced by Clooney and Grant Heslov, is loosely based on the non-fiction book 'The Monuments Men: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History' (Edsel and Witter, 2013) and focuses on the return of artistic masterpieces (mostly paintings and sculptures) stolen by the Nazis during WWII. Following the release of the film, Clooney and the rest of the cast took an explicit position at the press conference (Feb 2014) held for the

promotion of the film, in favour of returning of the marbles. For instance, Clooney suggested it is 'the right thing to do' and 'a very fair and very nice thing' while Murrey echoed that 'London's gotten crowded. There's plenty of room in Greece. England could take the lead on this.' The show business setting and popularity of key agents contributed to the visibility of the topic which went viral and became hotly debated in online environments. This provided a new frame for the discussion of the issue and re-opened it, yet again but more prominently, in the public sphere; this time against the backdrop of Greece and Europe embroiled in a deep and divisive financial crisis.

The paper draws on posts in the *Comment is Free* environment of the *Guardian;* a popular public domain with large numbers of usernames interacting over issues discussed in the newspaper's hard copy or online pages.

We draw on the analysis of 947 postings debating the return of the Parthenon Marbles. Social media have provided new times and localities for the negotiation of dominant discourses, highlighting the importance of research tapping into the processes of online argumentation for understanding the changing political sphere[ii].

We seek to integrate analytical principles from interactional sociolinguistics (IS) and the discourse-historical approach (DHA) (Reisigl and Wodak 2015; Angouri and Wodak 2014; Wodak 2015). This allows us to analytically dissect the multiple layers of context and look into the ways in which online users construct and negotiate cultural heritage, national identities, and the current economic and political context in the data. The DHA/IS frame (Angouri and Wodak, in prep) provides the theoretical tools to systematically link the IS focus on the 'speech event' (Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz 2008:536) with the DHA's theoretical and analytical apparatus for analysing and positioning a text within its wider socio-political and ideological contexts (Wodak, 2015). We combine a macro- and micro- level analysis and explore

how the users position themselves and others in the context of the debate (IS) and the pro- or anti-return arguments they draw on (DHA) to trace and deconstruct the interdependence and instrumentalisation of national identity politics in conflicts about heritage and the commodification of culture. Although we do not discuss the use of social media for political activity per se, the work has a contribution to make to the study of online communities for political debate. We structure the paper in three parts: first, we provide an overview of the Parthenon Marbles issue then turn to our theoretical framework, affordances of the methodology we advocate and the analysis of our dataset. Finally, we close the article with the implications of our findings and directions for further research.

The Parthenon Marbles: a socio-historic overview

The Parthenon Marbles, also referred to as the Elgin marbles (After Lord Elgin, ambassador to the Ottoman court of the Sultan in Istanbul (1801-1812)) include the collection of sculptures, inscriptions and architectural features acquired for the British government by Lord Elgin in 1816 now exhibited in the British Museum in the Duveen Gallery (Room 18). Under Elgin's instructions, the marbles were removed from the Acropolis (the Parthenon, the Erechtheion, the Propylaia, and the Temple of Athena Nike). The timeline (see Figure 1) demonstrates various stages in the travails of the marbles since their creation in the 5th century BC, considered relevant to the discussion here. Since the 1980s, after Melina Merkouri's (a Greek actress and minister of culture) political campaign, the issue has become a matter of official government involvement (established among the official goals in the Ministry of Culture).

INSERT FIGURE 1. ABOUT HERE

The timing of the shift towards an official agenda should be understood within the a frame of global implications relating to the transition from modernity to late modernity, or capitalist to late-capitalist economies, when post-nationalistic tendencies gave place to the resurgence of the nation-state: neoliberal tensions evoke new dimensions for the national narrative and create a new space for tourism to become a dominant economic 'asset'.

The employment of symbolic heritage items in the official discourses around the construction of Greek national narratives was first introduced in the 19th century and served in constructing a hegemonic myth of a heroic past. This mythologising also draws on the general shift of attention in Europe back to Classicism in the 17th century, as the timeline (Figure 1) delineates. Ever since its Merkouri inspired resurgence, the debate on the return of the marbles has had a sustained but fluctuating presence in the media's attention and imagary (Hamilakis 2010[1999]).

In July 2014, the Greek government requested that UNESCO act as a mediator in resolving the matter; a proposition declined by the British government (8th of April 2014). Negotiations with UNESCO are still open, as recent statements by the current Greek minister of culture demonstrate (e.g. Helena Smith, *The Guardian*, May 2016). The Greek side addresses the issue at the level of national politics, as integral to the Greek historical heritage; however, the British side frames the request as commodification, at the level of bilateral controversies between museums, embracing the concept of the Universal Museum. Abungu (2004) and Mimiotis (2014) problematising the criteria set out to characterise a museum as 'universal', scrutinising the characteristics of the museums that have self-proclaimed adherence to the term since its inception in 2002. In particular, they draw on the Declaration on the

Importance of Universal Museums that was signed in 2002 by 19 world-class prominent museums, all of European or American origin. Fiskesjö (2010) criticises the inherent and palpable contradictions in the founding principles of the declaration, intrinsic to its explicitly euro-centric/western position and perspective. The Greek government's main argument for the return of the Marbles is not centred on the commonly debated dispute around the legality of the acquisition but on the reunification of the sculptures as a coherent whole; restoring and enhancing understanding of the monument. The new Acropolis Museum equipped with all the technical facilities required for conservation and replete with pioneering ways of display comprises a significant component of the Greek government's argument for the reunification of the sculptures.

In February 2014 the statements of the 'The Monuments Men' cast sparked the debate anew. John Whittingdale, chairman of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee in the UK, criticised Clooney's 'poor knowledge on the topic'. Boris Johnson, mayor of London at the time, also cast ironic aspersions on Clooney's stance and knowledge (Ian Johnston, *Independent,* February 2014),while the British Museum, through a representative, stated that 'anybody is entitled to their view' and that the museum's trustees had 'always been very clear that they feel there's a public benefit to having the sculptures in our collection remain part of our collection'. On the Greek official side, Clooney's statements were welcomed with great enthusiasm, prompting Panos Panayotopoulos, the then minister of Culture and Sports, to send an official letter of gratitude to Clooney and reiterate the official arguments in favour of the petition.

The discussions continued, as in October 2014 Amal Alamuddin Clooney, a human rights lawyer and Clooney's wife, visited Athens, along with barrister Geoffrey Robertson and jurist Norman Palmer, to underpin the cause from a legal

perspective; holding a series of meetings with government officials, including the then Prime Minister, Antonis Samaras, and the Minister of Culture, Konstantinos Tasoulas. In May 2015 the international legal team handed the Greek government a detailed report suggesting taking the case to the International Criminal Court. However, the Greek government rejected the proposal on the premise of preferring a diplomatic and political approach, and Amal Alamuddin Clooney officially withdrew in December 2015.

The popularity of key agents, a financial crisis in Europe in full swing and Greece in the spotlight of international media contributed to the continuing visibility of and moiling debate surrounding the topic in both offline and online discursive environments; thus providing a new frame for the revival of the debate in the public sphere[iii].

The act of restoring a piece of art to its original geographic location of creation is associated with three adjacent but distinctive terms: *restitution, repatriation, return*. Restitution is a legal term that refers to 'cultural material that has been removed illegally from its country of origin' (Carducci 2008:128); repatriation is less frequently used in legal contexts and embeds an essentialist and rather linear/static understanding of the relation between the artefact and the *patria* associated with the geographic location of a nation. The term *return*, which we favour here, gives a broader application to the notion, without necessarily alluding to an 'illicit' removal in strict legal terms (Carducci 2008), and is the one that is most frequently used in the Parthenon Marbles debate.

In the case of symbolic artefacts, disputes about ownership and return campaigns are visible, appealing for public consumption, and provide fertile ground for the reification of powerful national narratives (De Cillia and Wodak 2009), myths of heroic pasts and related ideals, particularly in times of crisis.

Heritage and the construction of symbolic values

In the context of evolving late capitalistic societies, studies on multilingualism, English lingua franca, linguistic landscape, linguistic commodification, authenticity and heritage tourism (e.g. Coupland et al. 2005; Heller et.al. 2014) are becoming increasingly prominent in the sociolinguistic and applied linguistic literature. Particularly in relation to tourism studies, scholars have addressed issues of commodifying authenticity in touristic heritage sites (e.g. Kelly-Holmes and Pietikainen 2014) and have shown the multiple and often contradictory discourses that construct the 'in/authentic' in promotional material and everyday discourses (Coupland and Coupland 2014). Much less attention has been paid to the construction of heritage in public political discourse[iv] however, and our paper seeks to contribute to rectifying this omission. The overarching question we seek to address is the relationship between heritage, national identity and political discourse in times of crisis.

Here, we understand heritage as the contextually constructed representation of the past, a negotiated amalgam of situated discourse (Lowenthal 1988). Heritage discourses through which 'the past processed through mythology, ideology, nationalism, local pride, romantic ideas, or just plain marketing [turns] into a commodity' (Schouten 1995:21) are particularly relevant to national myths and ideologies.

We align with Appadurai's (1986:13) description of commodification as 'the situation in which [an object's] exchangeability (past, present, or future) for some other thing is its socially relevant feature.' Commodification then captures the process of attributing commercial (economic) value to goods or services that were never originally intended to be traded, turning them into, or treating them as mere

commodities[v]. The inferences of heritage are subject to discursive negotiation and contextual relativity, drawing on local, regional and national affiliations, including references to historical monuments and artefacts, traditional rituals and music.

In a neoliberal setting, the commercial heritage industry commodifies symbolic representations of the past into heritage products 'as part of a modern consumption of entertainment', such as strategically enacted neo-ecotourism where people expect, for instance, to be photographed next to the 'real' Incas in Peru (Graham et al. 2000:1; Kelly-Holmes and Pietikainen 2014). Accordingly, the value of heritage becomes a quantifiable notion and a tradable one too (e.g. 'Register your interest to own a piece of East London Heritage' – on a real estate advertising billboard). Pieces of artefacts and objects of antiquity or other historical legacies are employed in marketing campaigns, touristic advertisements and branding strategies (e.g. on rebranding Greece[vi]) as emblematic symbols of collectively imagined identities and serve a dual purpose: both of shaping national ideologies (internally) and establishing an official image resistant to external challenge or falsification (Kofos 1989; Heller et al. 2014).

> [W]hat cannot be valued cannot be priced and cannot be traded and yet it is precisely these values that are exploited within economic development strategies (Graham et al. 2000:131).

The attribution of value is understood here as a context-based process, constantly negotiated and co-constructed in discursive situ.

In the case of the Parthenon Marbles, within the revived context of independent nation-states and 'a diversified market that undergoes constant transformations and requires continuous renewal' (Heller et al. 2014:561), the Marbles have become the symbolic embodiment of imagined linear ethnic affiliations between modern and ancient Greece. This nationally constructed sacralisation of the Marbles has transformed them into an emblematic object of national identification. On these

premises, the incorporation of the Marbles' return into the official agenda of the Greek ministry for culture has brought the symbolic value of the Marbles to the fore, elevated the debate to a national political level and inaugurated a new era of national narratives. Clearly, this takes on particular significance in the current socio-economic context.

Heritage as emblem of the Nation

Nostalgias and national fantasies unravel the process of defining the 'ownership of the past' and provide the ideological and value-based singularisation of heritage (e.g. construing the Parthenon Marbles as individual and unique), which contributes to national narratives. This metanarrative of nationalism has always worked as the 'ideology of belongingness' (Hall 1995:185) and functions as an identification mechanism in the discursive construction of national (collective/individual) identities, which are now, however, recontextualised to accommodate and sustain a globalised neoliberal late capitalist environment (Wodak et al. 2009). The constant fantasising of *self* and *other* or *self* and *self* (construction of self-identification) alternates within the discursive process, giving and taking space, resetting the conversational arena and its notional boundaries. In this context, heritage becomes the compass between present and past and serves as a tool to restore lost or subverted values (Hall 2002; Lowenthal 1988): 'heritage displays inevitably recontextualise the past within the demands and priorities of the present' (Coupland and Coupland 2014: 503). These context bound trajectories are well reflected in the foundingmyths across different periods around the Parthenon Marbles (see figure 1 and socio-historic overview).

The notion of capital (economic, social, political) in Bourdieu's terms serves as a substratum embedded among the various imagined values attributed to the Parthenon

Marbles over the years: whether as the catalyst in the micro-politics between city-states in ancient Greece; or the artistic value attributed to them as items of classical antiquity; or their economic value as the bailout resource for Elgin's debts, as Hamilakis (2010[1999]) argues - employing the cultural biographical approach. Graham et al. (2000:17) posit that

> [t]he worth attributed to these artefacts rests less in their intrinsic merit than in a complex array of contemporary values, demands and even moralities.

Heritage as a resource of discursive identity attribution, as in the case of the data presented below, entails a significant element of locality. A common 'tradition' and a clearly defined territory become foundations for a collective fantasy of 'organic solidarity', as the recent depictions of Greek pride with respect to the Greek crisis demonstrate (Leontis 1995). Place is bound to co-constructed myths and national narratives and (collective) memory; naturalised indexicalities between people and place. These heterotopic loci construct the imagined territory of Hellenism and make the Parthenon Marbles one of its most significant landmarks[vii]. Evidently then, in the current context of the crisis, heritage discourses become intertwined in constructing new narratives of national pride.

Hence, in the *Guardian* environment, the interactants revisit and recontextualise the issue within its recent socio-historical biography. Drawing on the, arguably pro-return, content of the journalistic article, they negotiate the quantification of the value of the marbles, construct (ahistorical) national imaginaries and introduce trade off scenarios. By adopting a DHA/IS approach we are able to explore the ways in which users put forward pro-/anti-return arguments and make the financial crisis relevant in the argumentation process.

Context, Method, Data

The posts analysed here are drawn from the comments responding to one article published on the 11th February 2014, co-authored by the *Guardian'*s arts correspondent, Mark Brown, and the official correspondent in Greece, Helena Smith. An international English-speaking medium was chosen as it provides an insight into the stances of users who self-identify as Greeks, as well as others more or less affected by the European debt crisis (e.g. Angouri and Wodak 2014).The article selected was one of two attracting the highest number of comments and the only one providing a historic overview of the Parthenon sculptures debate and references to the current socioeconomic context. We consider this a fertile ground for the users to (dis)align and justify/negotiate alternative positions. This is further accentuated by the *Guardian* context; often seen as targeting 'left-of-centre, politically engaged intellectual[s]' (Singer and Ashman 2009: 17).[viii]

The article is structured around three core themes: the comments of the 'Monuments Men' cast -including direct quotes; the reactions of key stakeholders/government figures in Greece and Britain -including direct quotes; the historical context and references to the current situation in Greece. This structure covers both sides of the story but allows for ambiguity which affords different readings and a possible pro- return position. Note for instance: 'The actors joined a dispute which has simmered ever since *enormous* chunks [emphasis added] of the Parthenon's statuary were *removed by Lord Elgin* [emphasis added] (…)'; or with reference to the British Museum 'But at the British Museum there was *little sign* of policy change. A spokeswoman said everyone was entitled to their *view*.' And in closing: 'The museum has *about half* of the *remaining* marbles'; 'Athens having got the others, although *fragments* exist in collections such as the Louvre'. 'In 2009,

before the crash, Greece opened its *New Acropolis Museum*.' Juxtaposing two sides of a story is one of the most common argumentative schemes (Wodak 2016) and outside our interest here. Rather, what is of interest is how the article is deconstructed and referred to by users in their postings. The historical context and the value of the sculptures are hotly debated, together with the ethos (in an Aristotelian sense) of the cast and their statements.

Readers of the article were quick to respond and the first thread was posted at 20:56 on the same day and the last 3 days later. It was posted shortly after the film's press conference and was followed by a spate of comments in a short period (947 in 4 days), resulting in the quick fire pace of the ensuing interactions. The data was coded following a detailed thematic analysis approach. Table 1 provides an overview of some basic descriptive data.

INSERT TABLE 1. ABOUT HERE

In this paper we draw on our earlier work and elaborate further on our combining DHA with a focus on the micro analysis of interaction from an IS perspective. IS is typically associated with the legacy of John Gumperz and the analysis of spoken interaction; however its insights and tools are eminently useful in analysing other semiotic modes, such as Computer Mediated Discourse. IS shares with Conversation Analysis (CA) an emphasis on the detailed analysis of interaction, typically using CA conventions for representing talk in writing. IS, unlike CA, however, is interested in the relationship between the *situated here and now* and the wider socio-cultural context[ix]. IS is rarely used for addressing issues pertinent to the wider socio-political context; a limitation our approach addresses.

Accordingly, a combined DHA/IS approach (Angouri and Wodak 2014; in prep) allows us to analyse discourse on two levels: the interactional organisation of the

debate, how the users mobilise and structure pro-/return-positions (micro), as well as the actual arguments they draw on (macro).

More specifically, throughout the debate the interactants employ a series of argumentative schemes in the negotiation process. Specific argumentative schemes such as topoi are context dependent and are frequently employed in socio-historical and political debates where blaming, denying and positioning are salient (Wodak 2015; Boukala 2016; Amossy 2002). An IS informed approach provides the tools for capturing how multiple, and often conflicting, positions are locally negotiated between the users and shared meanings are positioned within the broader socio-political context. These shared meanings are mobilised through 'contextualisation cues', a core concept in IS referring to any feature (linguistic or semiotic) which the interactants recognise as carrying specific meaning/s in their local contexts. IS can then offer an insight into the micro-dynamics of interaction and can complement the argumentation analysis.

DHA draws on the concept of topos when appropriate[x]. Kienpointner (2011: 265) defines topoi as 'search formulas which tell you how and where to look for arguments'. Rubinelli (2009: 13) suggests that topoi are strategies of argumentation for gaining the upper hand and producing successful speeches. Topoi can be made explicit as conditional or causal paraphrases such as 'if x, then y' or 'y, because x' (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 69-80) and function as warrants that guarantee the transition from argument to conclusion, we illustrate this in the case of the argumentation below.

Wengeler (2003) emphasises a content- and context-specific definition of topoi as this allows deconstructing presupposed and frequently fallacious prejudices embedded in everyday common-sense conversations about specific topics. The notion of common sense (or everyday) argumentation is salient in our case as we focus on

the ways in which lay users draw on assumed shared positions for taking/projecting a stance. Topoi are not necessarily fallacious; many examples below manifest flawed logic, but in particular contexts, arguments using a specific topos can be convincing: Topoi are then – neutrally speaking – a useful shortcut appealing to existing knowledge.

For the purposes of this paper, we look into the most salient topoi the users mobilise, the ways in which they index dis/alignment with the positions taken by other users and connect to the broader socio-political environment.

At the heart of the debate is the pro-/anti-return position which is enacted in relation to ownership rights, national/heritage narratives and crisis blaming. The dataset is replete with manifestations of ideological and a/historical stance-taking cues and regular users quickly divide into ideological camps that last the life of the forum. We are particularly interested in how participants handle the projection/allocation of accusations/ justifications for their stances[xi] (and that of their interlocutors). The sections below draw on excerpts from 17 users, amongst the most active in the debate as the number and frequency of posts indicates. We discuss our findings starting from issues of ownership negotiation, we then move to the strategies used for doing national identity and heritage talk and conclude with the re-enactment of the ongoing financial crisis.

Who is the owner after all?

INSERT FIGURE 2. ABOUT HERE

The main axis of ideological positioning, as emerging through the data, is built around the allocation of ownership, justified and legitimised by specific argumentative schemes and topoi. Throughout the threads, commentators are called to explicitly

claim membership in the pro- or against- ideological camps and stance-taking on the issue of belonging becomes a self-categorisation mechanism (Bamberg et al. 2011). Figure 2 is a simplified representation of the key positions the interactants take in the threads. Ancient and modern Greece are constructed as a linear succession order which is mobilised in relationship to four abstract owners: 'Greece', the 'UK', 'Europe' and the 'World'. The most common are the Greeks (21 users out of 55 who take an explicit position), the British (11/55) and the World (10/55).

The debate resolves into two camps: the against-return group, which attributes the ownership of the marbles to the British Museum or to Britain (abstract) and is built around the act of purchase and the importance of continuous possession and safekeeping. The marbles become a commodity with a specific economic price, which is then employed to legitimise the claim. This group draws heavily on the topoi of value and legality- *'if the British Museum acquired the sculptures legally, paid the suggested price and keeps them safe, they belong to them'.* The second camp emanates from the pro-return group and ownership is attributed to the Greek people/state/nation basing the claim on the constructed Greek national identity through taken for granted linear affiliations between ancient and modern Greece.

The topos of history gets foregrounded here–'*if this belonged to Greece from antiquity, it is part of Greek history/national identity, it belongs to Greece now as well'.*

Both camps draw on the topos rights: *'if X [the law and/or history] is on our side, then it is rightfully ours'* and mobilise the topoi of time and space '*if this was taken from Greece (geo-political position) in 1816, then it belongs to Greece' OR 'if this resides in the British Museum/Britain since 1816, then it belongs to British Museum/Britain'.* The topos of time indexes the exact time of removal or other core

incidents mobilised in the debate and the topos of space positions Greece/Britain's geopolitical space as the locus of the marbles.

This debate thus triggers the emergence of constructs of national narratives and related ideologies that work as sense making tools and membership categorisation devices in the pro- or against- ideological camps. 'Us and them' discourses reveal the general urge for positioning into one of the two main ideological groups, and in turn construct a frame for the users to delineate their stance on the issue. Following from the discussion of the wider context we now take a closer look at the debate starting with Excerpt 1.

Ownership: purchase rights

Although the Greek government discourse places less emphasis on the argument of 'ownership', this issue is explicitly debated in 55 posts in the data.

To set the scene, starting with the against-return group, the users' positions are often made explicit as in excerpt one where 'Wiseaftertheevent' initiates a No-prefaced post, structured as an elliptical clause followed by a full stop. Disagreement studies (e.g. Angouri and Locher 2012) often show a preference towards indirect disagreement/agreement; other work has associated agreement with positive concepts such as harmony and avoiding loss of face in interaction. Although this position is still being debated, disagreement has been largely associated with conflict (e.g. Angouri 2012). The position we take here is that context specific factors and the norms of different communities are critical in both identifying a sequence as disagreement and evaluating it as markedly positive or negative. At the same time yes/no are explicit markers of stance (e.g. Clift 2006) and the user takes a position in constructing ownership which then becomes a resource for presenting the pro-/anti-

return position in an epistemically robust way and in relation to positively marked values such as returning to the 'rightful' owners (with the adjective being used in 21 posts).

Further to this, ownership discourses set the contextual platform for the claims that follow in the thread: purchase is a legal guarantor of ownership. The signifier 'acquired legally' enacts the discursive normalisation of the act of trading cultural artefacts and deduces the commodification of heritage (embedded in 'fair price') to a common sense phenomenon. The second half of the utterance is substantiated on the topos of *threat* and deploys an imagined scenario of destruction, without however any finger-pointing at its causal agent – probably Greece is insinuated here – and thus the acquisition is justified as an unavoidable necessary evil. The user next aims to abate the exceptionality of the debate by using the fallacy of equation (equating unequal phenomena and events) by constructing an unreal /counterfactual scenario (shifting the case to America and consequently to the whole world). Indeed, 20 occurrences use the same analogy and another 13 include strong anti-American claims, which relate to the context of the *Guardian* article and Matt Damon and Bill Murray's comments reacting to the suggestion that being American means being ignorant.

INSERT EXCERPT 1. ABOUT HERE

In the response 'Theo Jan' rejects this argument. The interrogative, 'did you say' (line 9), is very skilfully used to weaken the earlier position (Heritage and Raymond 2005) as a pseudo-request for confirmation which 'Theo Jan' addresses by offering a different token of ownership; the juxtaposition of 'sacred'/'Thieves' and the intricate argumentation about 'paying the thief who paid the thief' adds to the value judgment of the position enacted here. Ownership is granted explicitly ('Greek monument') and 'sacred' signifies linear affiliations with ancient Greece and the narrative of

Greece's past. The construction of self ('Greek') is built on the otherisation of the 'Thieves' Turks, who in this case become the agent of blame as being the first thieves in exchange of the victimised Greeks. A fallacious past is constructed which seems to build a teleological continuity from ancient Greece the current Greek EU member state while neglecting all other relevant periods and upheavals in European history.

Ownership: historical rights - modern and ancient Greece continuum and the construction of national identity

21 occurrences within the pro-return group attribute the ownership of the marbles to the abstract *agents* of *Greeks/Greece* and proclaim them as 'rightful owners'. This argument draws on the situated co-construction of a *Greek national identity* based on a single Greek culture as a continuum that spans ancient and modern Greece and, consequently, attributes rights of ownership to the people of the nation. These socio-cultural affiliations are, evidently, built on an imagined linear trajectory of communities that are defined differently by different people. Excerpt 2 is an illustration of this discourse where the 'people of Greece' are constructed as a homogenous whole with a collective past and a common historical trajectory.

INSERT EXCERPT 2. ABOUT HERE

Recreations of *a-historicalnational narratives* around the 'imagined territory of Hellenism' work as *agents of ownership*. Excerpt 3 provides a fuller illustration of the intertwined discourses. Throughout the postings, the interactants index the topoi of *history*, *time* and *space*. Line 3 situates the issue in the socio-historical era of the Ottoman Empire and the use of past tense 'were' positions the issue in the past. The repetition of *own* (trope of *pleonasm*) in 'Theo Jan''s posting is chosen to emphasise

the claim. The user draws on narration and unfolds a fallacious *syllogism* which is built on *factualisations*, so as to make the *pseudo-rational causal conclusion* that 'Britain is also a thief in a line of pillagers' (Ochs and Capps 2001). The use of affirmative sentences indexes the position taken as an undisputable fact while the 'so' prefaced utterance (line 4) is strategically used to summarise and come to a concluding statement. 'So' prefaced turns have been associated with doing power in interaction (e.g. Holmes and Stubbe 2003) and the user here attempts to control the floor. The subordinated clause helps to further unravel the *syllogism*. Lines 3-6 are indicative of how the topos of *history* becomes a compass in argumentation: a historicised narration navigates the argument through time ('after so many years', line 6) (Forchtner 2014). The use of mitigation ('I am afraid') and the *irony* employed in the last utterance constitute a direct challenge interpreted as such by 'SumerianThunderbox' as the response shows.

INSERT EXCERPT 3. ABOUT HERE

'SumerianThunderbox''s response aims to reject the claim by countering a different but relevant argument which challenges the linearity between modern and ancient Greece. It also challenges the epistemic authority of the user by questioning the accuracy of the claims. The use of direct questions directly challenge 'Theo Jan''s face and this reaches a peak with lines 12-13 positioning 'Theo Jan' as uninformed in a direct attack. As it is common in all the threads, direct face attacks (argumentum ad hominem) are employed to challenge the arguments put forward. Although the overall style of the users leans to the formal end of the spectrum, as shown by attention to orthography, relatively sparse use of features that are common in popular social media platforms and careful use of persuasive strategies in argument structure, personal face attack is still noted in the disagreement sequences analysed.

In the response 'Theo Jan' employs a *historicised narrative* and constructs a homogeneous monolithic representation of the *Greeks* drawing on the same language>same customs>same religion continuum. The linking point between the ancient and the modern is the locality ('known as Greece'): the imagined territory of Hellenism (*Megali idea*) (Clogg 1988). The construction of the *idealised* profile continues, and the claim is presented as the unequivocal common sense truth ('I guess you know it all'). The quote ends with a *relativisation* (trope of analogy) between ancient Greek states and modern UK, aiming to accommodate to the interactional context and the interlocutor. The homogeneity of *Greece* is constructed on the basis of language, culture and customs (line 18, 19) as well as religion and geographical location (lines 19, 20, 21) which is related to the modern state also through a comparison of the UK in WWII (topoi of *history,time* and *space*). The posts in the threads are quite long which provides the space to the users to develop their arguments. Despite the fact that the blog provides an asynchronous context, the quick succession of the messages (see lines 1, 11, 19), is closer to the immediacy of spoken interaction and contributes to the tone of the disagreement. The sequence between ancient and modern times and people is directly related to the construction of ownership. This serves as a resource for the construction of in and out groups in a blame game that distinguishes between victims (e.g. the rightful owners) and perpetrators (e.g. the thieves or, for the other camp, those who make false accusations).

Overall, identity negotiation and co-construction is an ongoing process which allows interlocutors to position themselves within specific groups which are associated with 'ownership rights'. This identity work allows the interactants to claim membership of the emerging ideological groups; the navigation 'between uniqueness and a communal sense of belonging and being the same as others' (Bamberg et al.

2011: 177). The choices of topics to narrate and the attribution of characteristics may contain membership attribution through a self-identification (integration)/differentiation processes, in-group recognition/rejection and external categorisation by the out-group. However, the perception of identity does not necessarily coincide with the categorisation ascribed to the individual by the in-group or the out-group (Bamberg et al. 2011; Phinney et al. 2001). Identity construction becomes a 'multi way' process through which the individuals negotiate positions claimed by themselves and those projected upon them by others individually and the group collectively. This process is based on imaginaries of characteristics that distinguish *Self* and *Other* (Reisigl and Wodak 2001). As with the discursive strategies employed in the positive construction of self/ in-group, the negative construction of the Other also works as a mechanism of membership categorisation, which in its turn becomes a resource for argumentative positioning (Ameli & Merali 2006).

INSERT EXCERPT 4. ABOUT HERE

Excerpt (4) responds to an accusation that 'young people in Britain' do not know Greece's contribution to 'Western civilisation'. The user re-claims the floor and with a marker 'oh' indicating exclamation and imitating a means of disagreement in spoken interaction, aims to counter-attack the accusations and dominate the disagreement sequence. By introducing a third person narrative, the user aims to distance the post from a direct face attack and successfully builds a different, contemporary and negative narrative/profile for Greece(Howarth et al. 2000).The last utterance shows consistency in the communicative strategy, as the topos of *definition* – how is Greece defined – differently than what 'Theo Jan' suggests. A switch is noted here to the current EU hegemonic narrative about Greece and many fallacious

hasty generalisations. This position, however, is resisted strongly in the pro-return camp which mobilises colonisation history in response to attacks such as the one in Excerpt 4. Excerpt 5 is a good example of this, which presents the return of the marbles as a moral duty. In 5, *irony* is employed though the marked use of the adjective *progressive* and the colloquial use of 'Brits'portrayed as *enduring colonialists*. As in the case of ancient/modern Greece, past and present are also directly juxtaposed in the case of the British Empire. In this way, the topos of *history* employed by 'Theo Jan' is challenged.

Discourses of ownership of the marbles become discourses of heritage where the people of Greece are presented in either positive (typically in association with a glorious past) or negative (typically in a stereotypical manner of having misused public funding) light. This is discursively constructed in the duality of 'us' and 'them': the *mitigation* of the in-group acts (that one time) and the essentialisation of Other through *a fallacy* of *hasty generalisations* that reproduce stereotypical constructs about *Greece/Greeks* and 'function as characteristic moves in negative portrayal strategies' (Van Dijk 1984: 73).

INSERT EXCERPT 5. ABOUT HERE

As the two camps further develop binary positions, arguments of trade off emerge and are offered as a solution/closure of the issue. We discuss below three common trade off positions which draw on the topos of *burden* according to which: '*If a country is burdened (by e.g. debt), this should be acted upon to reduce the burden'* and the topos of *value* whereby the sculptures are associated *value measured in monetary terms*.

Arguing about values

The topoi of *burden*/*value* take various guises in the dataset including the economic value of the marbles, a symbolic value, an economic value of the Greek crisis or the moral value of the arguments. Value is directly indexed through the sold/stolen/bought marbles, the act of theft/looted and the legal /illegal moral value of the act. Abstract constructs, such as 'cultural heritage' and 'historical monuments', become agents of value through a process of commodification, which is embedded and enacted within discursive negotiations of trade off (Appadurai 1986). We focus below on three common ones enacted in the data where a 'deal' is proposed.

Trade off 1: Greece owes to the British museum for protecting the marbles

The *imagined debt* 'Greece owes to the British museum/people' is a popular resource (with 29 postings drawing on it) for building this common 'trade off'. Excerpts 6 and 6.1 demonstrate these discourses.

The users seek to attribute economic *value* to the preservation and maintenance of the marbles. In Excerpt 6 the two interrogative statements allow the users to position themselves against the return -assuming that a condition for the return is to 'settle' the matter and pay each other back. Direct questions are frequently used in direct disagreement and face attack (e.g. 'steveips' in excerpt 6 uses them as a rhetorical device).

The 'payoff', topos of *value*, is then rejected upon a historical re-contextualisation that breaks the link between the present and the past. Although the recipients of the 'money' are mostly abstract in the dataset -and- indexed under Britain/Brits/British people or Greece/Greek people- this is challenged here in every line of the posting building upon the discontinuity of the marbles' owners and the modern Greek state.

INSERT EXCERPT 6. ABOUT HERE

Addressing the issue from a different angle, in Excerpt 6.1, the user proclaims a pro-return stance but, in a strategically ambiguous post, the user constructs the *glorification* of UK's contribution in the preservation of the marbles (*excruciating*; *saving them*-note the topos of *history* here) while at the same time questions the position by referring to the whitening of the marbles in the 30s that attracted wide criticism and is still used to weaken the position constructing the British museum as the key agent for *protecting* the marbles (www.britishmuseum.org). The post also includes an element of 'trade off' ('quits') embedded in humour that works as a mitigating disclaimer for the defacing claims.

INSERT EXCERPT 6.1 ABOUT HERE

Moving to the counter position, the 'existential debt' *Europe* owes to *Greece* is constructed as the basis of a deal of return which needs to be done in order to reaffirm the moral order.

Trade off 2: The world owes Greece for its contribution to world heritage

The counter-argument within the pro-return group attributes *cultural and historical* supremacy to Greece and eulogises its contribution to world heritage. The ideological core of the argument, as Hamilakis (2010[1999]: 313) describes, is 'to remind the West of its 'debt' to Hellenic heritage'. National narratives of imagined situated 'Hellenic' identities are prominent in the sample and the topos of *history* becomes once again evident in the data. The excerpts below illustrate this position. The user in Excerpt 7 portrays their argument as the only truth (we all know), employing the topos of *definition.* The claim is framed so as to provoke emotional connotations

('deep down') and 3 examples are employed to substantiate its validity and construct a topos of *threat*: the museums would shut down if it wasn't for the stolen (line 5) artefacts. The superiority of Greek museums is constructed through the same argument.

INSERT EXCERPT 7. ABOUT HERE

Similarly, in Excerpt 7.1 'we all acknowledge' embeds the unequivocal factualisation of Greece's contribution to global civilisation. The use of 'we' contributes to claiming a collective stance here. However, the user does not take sides on the pro/anti return debate here but suggests the marbles *belong* to the 'world' which implies that both positions are wrong and dissociates the issue from the Greek/British ownership in an attempt to establish consensus.

INSERT EXCERPT 7.1 ABOUT HERE

Finally, in 7.2 the topos of *knowledge* is expressed through *given* and *invented* and is enacted with the trope of *syllogism* (given A is true…then B is true), the latter crystallises the idea of 'cultural debt' and is prevailing in similar discourses (Greeks invented democracy etc.) although it can also be a causal ironic argument-*if one has invented rhetoric, one must be right/good at it*.

INSERT EXCERPT 7.2. ABOUT HERE

Ancient Greece's contribution to the philosophy of science and world knowledge constitute a dominant discourse in the construction of the national identity of the modern Greek state as well as the construction of Philhellenism in modern times. In the data the users draw on this narrative in constructing their own position of the

value of the cultural capital. This however is not related only to the distant past as the next section shows.

Trade-off 3: Greece owes the EU for the bailout

The last category of 'trade off' argumentation comprises arguments that re-contextualise the debate in relation to the current socio-economic circumstances: the Greek financial crisis. The ideological frame is built around the notion of *debt* and blame for the crisis. The argument works in a similar way to the rest of the 'trade off' claims: the financial debt is traded for the commodified marbles.

In excerpt 8, the user closes their posting by associating the widely discussed Greek 'bail out' with ownership of the marbles. As in other cases discussed earlier, the claim is portrayed as taken-for-granted knowledge, post hoc fallacy and discursive power dynamics underlie this : 'the money that the German taxpayers' (construction of positive stereotype: 'well off') is contrasted to the poor and helpless Greece that needs to be fed ('fork over') (Laclau and Mouffe (2001 [1985]). A different locality is proposed to house the marbles then, symbolising ownership through current debt.

INSERT EXCERPT 8. ABOUT HERE

From a similar angle, other users attribute ownership to Britain on the basis of the current contribution to the EU in general and Greece in particular. This is clear in 8.1. where ownership of the new Acropolis museum is attributed to the British financial institutions and the British working people (line 10). The 'British tax-payer' becomes the bearer of all financial burdens, both of the museum and the Greek banks. Indirectly the relationship between Britain and the EU is also constructed in this posting; Britain contributes what seems to be a large chunk of funding which the EU

handles and which in this case was directed to the Acropolis museum. This position is constructed as evidence for the prior claim.

INSERT EXCERPT 8.1 ABOUT HERE

These discourses, however, are also challenged in the debate as 8.2 illustrates. 'Chrysts' questions the spatiotemporal implications of equating the current crisis with the marbles, hence challenging the topos of *history*. Already in line 3 the user addresses the forum and criticises the key arguments as being based on *unverified factualisations* concluding 'that most comments in favour of the British' refer to the current crisis. The post goes even further and compares the financial situation in Greece to the troubles of the British economy (comparing incomparable phenomena-a fallacy). The post skilfully moves beyond the description of the current socio-economic status quo and questions the role of the British museum (protecting/damaging the marbles vs. making profit). The user distances 'self' from 'them' (them; theirs; the Greeks; the British) and presents the position as one that ('should be') commonly accepted ('let's be honest') in order to substantiate the importance of the Greek marbles to the British museum. The last utterance which refers to profit, contradicts with previous statement that 'the issue is […] nor an economic one'. This post echoes the stance discussed earlier (excerpt 8) and recontextualises the monetary value.

INSERT EXCERPT 8.2 ABOUT HERE

To close the discussion of the findings, the analysis shows how discourses of heritage are mobilised in the sense making process the users of the forum put forward. In taking two opposing positions, the users here construct heritage through

commodifying both the marbles and the past and present socio-economic and political context. We revisit some of the key issues in the next and final section of the paper.

Concluding remarks

This article has attempted to look into the complex nexus of value relationships which emerge through the discursive re-contextualisation and negotiation of the return of the Parthenon Marbles in the current political and economic context. Commentators co-construct cultural heritage in the micro-contextual environment of the *Guardian* domain and relate the debate to the broader socio-political context in 2014 (Greece/Britain, the Greek crisis). We have shown that the basic argumentative axis is built around the attribution of *ownership* to the marbles and is (being) negotiated on various levels of ideological positioning: the topoi of *legality* and *rights* are employed to introduce the respective agents of ownership, substantiated by a range of identity narratives and narratives of the past (topos of *history*). We also looked at discourses of trade off that emerge upon the new setting of the crisis: the topoi of *burden* and *value* are mobilised throughout the dataset on the one hand as a quantifying agent for the marbles and on the other as a qualitative signifier of the immense Hellenic heritage. Both positions and related arguments bring the debate to the contemporary era and capitalist economy. Heller and Duchene (2016: 142 drawing on Appadurai) argue that 'capitalism can potentially commodify pretty much anything'. This is well represented in the data.

Going back to the notion of heritage, the analysis sought to capture the complexity of its definitions and recontextualisations throughout the dataset. Figure 3 summarises the most common signifiers of heritage in the paper. Some of the commentators refer to art and artefacts, archaeological sites and monuments or classical archaeology

(11/32 in total). Despite being an abstract notion, heritage is most frequently used (17/32 occurrences) as a rather monolithically defined and linear concept. It seems to strongly index ownership and belonging, often identified with nation/nationality, where the latter is conceived based on the current modern (official) division of nations (Greeks, British etc.) but is also stretched along the spectrum of historicised imaginaries with respect to its diachronic longevity.

INSERT FIGURE 3. ABOUT HERE

The multiple references to nation in the context of the data demonstrates the extent to which contextual factors become fundamentally influential elements in the discursive co-construction of abstract entities at specific periods in time. As opposed to 'national heritage' some commentators use the term 'world heritage' as a way of rejecting one-dimensional ownership claims, but still projecting (abstract) belongingness/ownership to the 'world'. In both cases commentators attribute historical affiliations and values to heritage, what Munasinghe (2005: 253) describes as 'discursive information on historic notions and action'.

The debate around the marbles has been revisited throughout its birth and rebirth in a plethora of settings, revealing its persistence in time and the recurrent value of the arguments and its unique *social biography* (Hamilakis 2010 [1999]). Evidence of the ongoing re-contextualisation is the emergent theme of the Greek crisis since mid-late 2000s. The saliency of the 'crisis element' has gradually transformed from an ephemeral rather transitory situation to a prolonged and rooted *status quo*, reflected both in domestic (Greece) everyday discourses and in external representations of the phenomena, which has led to the politicisation of everyday and official as well as media discourses. This taken-for-granted construct of the Greek crisis, and consequently of a newly defined Greek identity, has been used not only in discussions

around the crisis per se but as a co-related factor in various topics, as in the case of the Parthenon Marbles. Discourses of crisis and discourses of cultural heritage become blurred and negotiated in the public sphere, whether that comprises the official agenda of the government, the negotiation of the debate within the media or in online environments. The online space demonstrates the transient nature of discourse and its context-based principle.

To conclude, this paper did not aim to provide answers or to exhaust the debates mobilised in the Parthenon Marbles case. We have contributed, however, to the body of work that problematises the way these notions are negotiated in interaction and the sense making process as negotiated in different contexts responding to and picking up various positions put forth in the media. Further to this, by drawing on the online environment, we align with those who make a case for more research on the internet as a zone for political interaction (see also in Wodak and Angouri 2014).

We have also proposed the theoretical and analytical DHA/IS approach which allows linking the macro/micro contexts and the accessing of the multiple layers of meaning. Given the complexity of the questions critical studies seek to address, drawing on complementary theoretical approaches and methodologies allows for a more systematic and robust multi-level analysis and holistic approach of the topic. The DHA/IS approach allows to look into the way argumentative schemes work in situ and the key positions the interactants negotiate.

The notion of heritage and the multiple meanings it affords in political debates require further research by critical scholars in general, and sociolinguists in particular. As societies evolve towards the de/re-teritorialisation of nationality and ethnicity (Wodak 2015), the reactions to the debate obtain a new contextual basis; a new globalised prism that entails both imagined local, global, and virtual heterotopias. Such reactions will generate the need for new studies into discourses of heritage, as in

the debate about the Parthenon Marbles and its ongoing conceptual re-contextualisations.

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ii We acknowledge that those who interact online in any given environment have had access to a certain level of digital literacy, have access to internet and select to use the medium for this purpose. This however is not considered a limitation for our project.

[iii]Similar but not completely comparable debates have characterised some aspects of the huge and complex restitution agenda regarding Aryanized Austrian and German Jewish properties, housing and art by the Nazi regime during World War II. The recent film 'The Woman in Gold' (directed by Simon Curtis for BBC, Thorpe, 2015) has aptly covered some of these dimensions while focusing on a famous painting by Klimt ('Adele'). In this case, the Austrian government claimed that the famous painting was part and parcel of the Austrian cultural heritage and identity and adamantly tried to retain the painting in the Leopold Museum in Vienna.

[iv]We use every-day political discourse here in referring to debates by people in public who do not claim a relevant professional or expert identity (e.g. parliamentarians) but which address issues related to topics, events, institutions or campaigns related to political actions, actors or systems. The term is often used to designate a focus on power and inequality in language use.

v The term should not be confused with the process of commoditisation, which refers to the downgrading of product/object market value into a mere commodity (Rushkoff, 2005).

vi i.e. Peter Economides - Rebranding Greece - YouTube

vii Coming out as a product of the creation of European Independent Nations with specific borders, with minor territorial variations, place becomes 'both an input and an output of the process of heritage creation' (Graham et al, 2000:4; On the commodification of place and heritage see e.g. Shuang, 2012).

viii Other social media environments, e.g., tabloid press or other conservative platforms, could arguably provide access to more explicit nationalist discourses and heated debates. This is not of interest here on two grounds: a) we are interested in the more nuanced positioning and argumentation strategies and b) we prioritised popular domains and selected articles that attracted near 1000 postings. This resulted in two articles and the one chosen here was deemed the most suitable on the criteria discussed in the text.

ix Although IS and CA have been perceived (and still are by many) as distinctive and separate, a case can be made for the two coming closer in analyzing the relationship between the interactional order and societal power structures.

xThe kind of persuasive and rhetorical means that can be used depends on topic, genre and audience orientation, as well as intention; these factors are instrumental in determining the argumentation schemes which seem most adequate and appropriate. Thus, in the concrete analysis, it will sometimes be Toulmin's model (2003), sometimes Walton's practical reasoning, and sometimes van Eemeren's Pragma-dialectics which make the best sense (see Walton 1996).

xi We use the term 'stance' here to refer to how the users dis/align with the others in the pro/anti return debate and with the position taken by the article itself. We do not see IS and Stance Analysis (see e.g. Jaffe, 2009) as necessarily correlated, the latter has a closer association with the variationist tradition. Overall, the relationship between different theoretical frameworks should be viewed as a matter of definition more than anything else. For instance cues for Jaffe (2009) are the 'basic, culturally specific tools for stance taking' (2009:10). From this perspective then, it is possible to see the two approaches as intertwined. A further discussion however goes beyond the scope of this paper.

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APPENDICES

Tables

Total number of comments:	947
Total number of threads:	312
Total number of commentators:	377
Pro return (total):	96/377
Pro return (openly stated):	86/96
Pro return (insinuated):	10/96
Against return (total):	30/377
Against return (openly stated):	23/30
Against return (insinuated):	7/30
Number of deleted comments:	14
Number of comments missing:	1

Table 1. Basic descriptive data

Figures

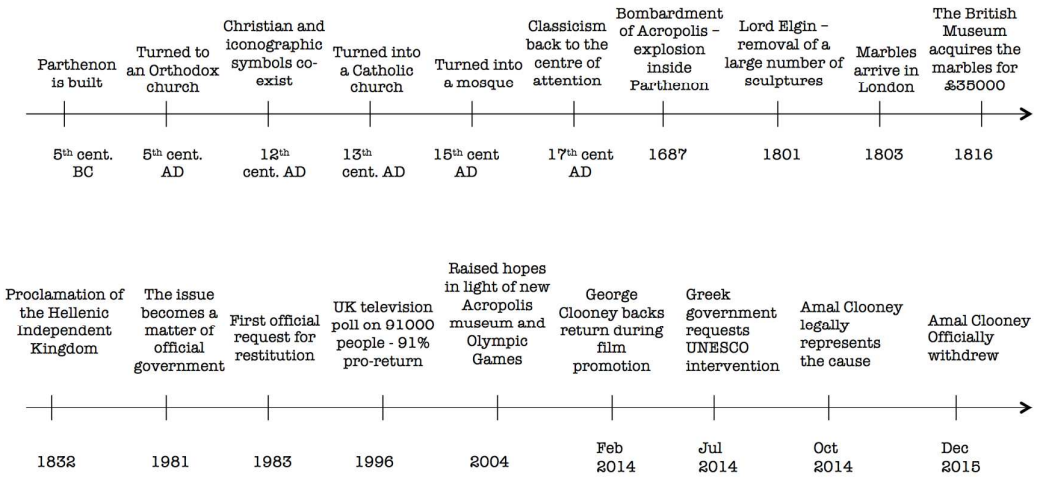

Figure 1. The Parthenon Marbles: A brief overview.

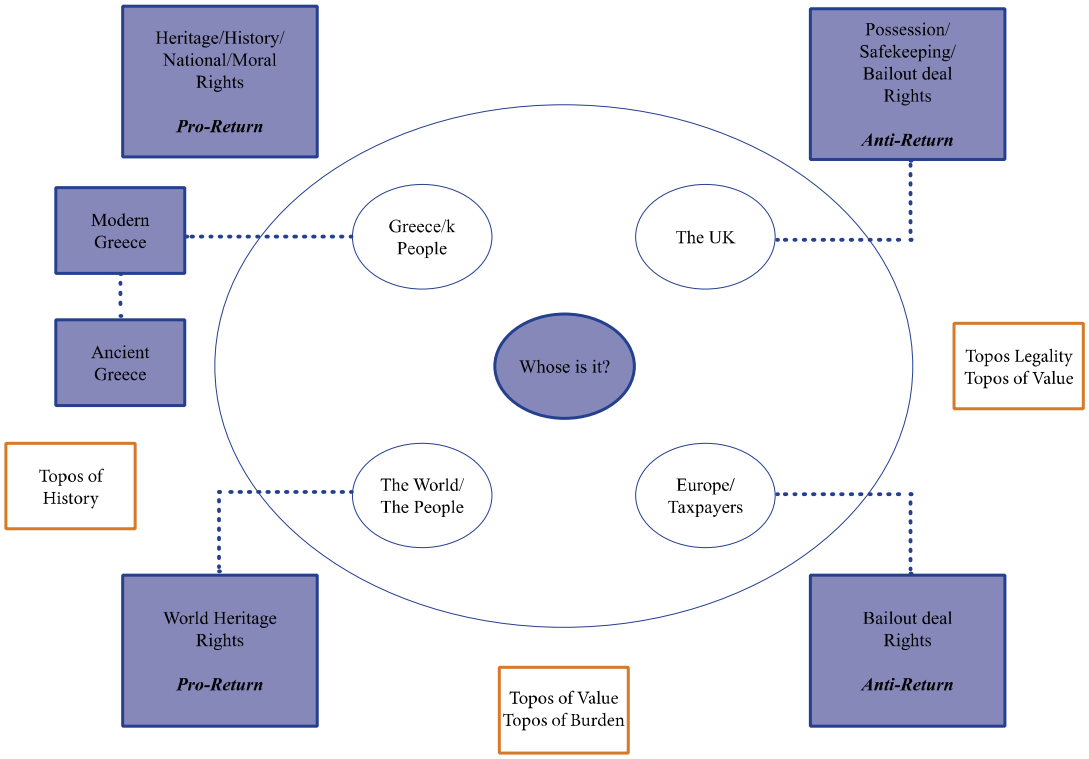

Figure 2. Negotiation of ownership

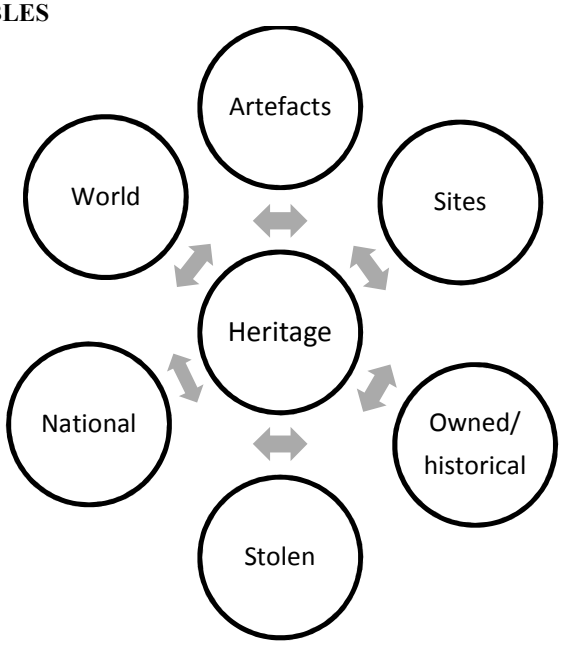

Figure 3. The co-construction of heritage in the data

Excerpts

1 2 3 4 5 6 7	**Wiseaftertheevent - 11 February 2014 11:37pm** No. They were acquired legally and for a fair price at the time, and had they not been, the chances are they would have been irreparably damaged or destroyed. If we are to start on that track let's ask the Americans to give back every historic artefact they have bought from Britain and other countries throughout the world.
8 9 10 11	**Theo Jan > Wiseaftertheevent- 12 February 2014 1:07am** Did you say bought from Britain, in that case they are the rightful owners. Elgin bought a piece of a Greek monument sacred to Greeks from Turkish Thieves, a completely different story!

Excerpt 1.

1 2	On this point, I do concur with the principle that these marbles should be returned as they are the essence of greek culture and civilisation.
1 2	and return the originals to their proper owner, which have immense EMOTIONAL VALUE to the PEOPLE OF GREECE.

Excerpt 2.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	**Theo Jan – 12 February 2014 1:13am** Greeks were the rightful owners of their own culture and not Turks. So Elgin paid the thief, (that makes him a thief himself) and then the British state paid the thief who paid the thief to take the loot! In this case I am afraid Britain is also a thief in a line of pillagers. The worst thing is after so many years Britain displays it proudly around the world. Here look at the stuff I have been stealing around the world when I was having the power to do so!!! 4
9 10 11 12 13 14	**SumerianThunderbox > Theo Jan - 12 February 2014 1:25am** Greeks? How do you mean Greeks? What Greek national state was there in 450BC? What Greek identity existed at the time? Do you know how Athens funded the creation of the Parthenon and its friezes? Do you have the first clue about which you speak? 4
15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25	**Theo Jan > SumerianThunderbox - 12 February 2014 1:49am** And to answer your questions Greece (or Hellas), was a composition of cities that were speaking the same language, had the same customs and culture, believed in the same religion, and resided in the same are known today as Greece (and the West side of Turkey-Still in this areas you can listen to Greek being spoken). They were known to unite and set aside their differences against enemies from the East (United like UK). Romans invaded Greek impressed by their culture they adopted their religion, building styles and blah blah blah.....(I guess you know it all) cause British are taught ancient Greek and Roman history intensively at school.

26	Greek of that time resembles the notion of United Kingdom. You all speak
27	English but you are different cities/states and when attacked by Nazis you
28	behave like one country 80 years later Scotland wants to set free! 2

Excerpt 3.

1	**Richard Dean > Stelathens - 11 February 2014 11:55pm**
2	
3	Oh I think enough young Brits know what Greece means, corrupt politicians, an
4	island full of blind people who drive cars, pensioners who haave been dead for
5	30 years but are still paid a pension, doctors who only treat if you are connected
6	or have hard cash..... do I need to carry on?

Excerpt 4.

1	**vkhosla - 12 February 2014 3:00am**
2	
3	I see that even "progressive" Brits support keeping what they looted from the
4	days of Empire. The colonial impulse dies hard.

Excerpt 5.

1	**steveips - 12 February 2014 10:40am**
2	
3	Would Greece like to pay Britain for all of those years of safe stewardship while
4	it was given by the Ottoman Empire? Would the Greeks like to demand
5	compensation from Turkey for giving Britain the marbles?
6	I imagine not as the answer would be that the Ottoman Empire no longer exists.
7	And neither did the Greek state.

Excerpt 6.

1	**McStep - 11 February 2014 10:35pm**
2	
3	we probably should give them back.
4	would also not mind if Greece backpayed the UK for decades of excruciating
5	maintenance and care (that one time that one prat decided to ""clean"" them
6	aside) and thanked us for saving them from the neglect and rot that much of the
7	Parthenon and broader classical antiquity in Greece was left to. quits if they take
8	Prince Philip back as well though.[…]

Excerpt 6.1.

1	**Μαρία Καμαράτου - 14 February 2014 12:03am**
2	

3 4 5 6	[…] But deep down we all know that museums like the British, the German, the Canadian & others throughout the world, would be shut down if they had to return all the stolen art from other countries that they exhibit. I don't recall seeing anything but Greek items in all the museums throughout Greece. […]

Excerpt 7.

1 2 3 4 5	**EcclesCake - 12 February 2014 7:28am** […]We all acknowledge the role of Greece in the development of our civilisation and this is an important component in that heritage. It is neither Britain's nor Greece's, it belongs to us; […]

Excerpt 7.1.

1 2 3 4	**loutraki > lichkingsmum - 12 February 2014 10:32am** An honest argument. And given that Greeks invented rhetoric, an effective oral case.

Excerpt 7.2.

1 2 3 4 5	**Frites - 11 February 2014 11:58pm** […] PS Given all of the money that the German taxpayers have had to fork over to Greece, perhaps an argument could be made for the marbles to be housed in Berlin?

Excerpt 8.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	**loutraki > Luckyspin - 12 February 2014 10:26am** Interestingly, half the money for the new Acropolis Museum came from mostly British tax-payers via EU funding. The other half came from Greek banks which have not been able to pay the cash back to UK tax-funded institutions such as the Royal Bank of Scotland. The new Acropolis Museum is beautiful -- but it was the British tax-payer who funded it, so Clooney should at least give the British working people some credit and brownie points. 3

Excerpt 8.1.

1 2 3	**chrysts - 13 February 2014 7:37am** It is really funny how most comments in favour of the British attempt to draw

4	attention to the economic crisis Greece is tormented by the last few years. As if
5	Great Britain's economy is thriving at the moment. In any case, the issue is
6	neither a political one nor an economic one. It is a pity that the British attempt
7	to appear superior to other nations by insinuating that the Greeks would not
8	know how to protect and preserve the Parthenon marbles, when it is widely
9	known that the British caused great damage to the marbles when they first
10	placed them to their museum.
11	And finally let's be honest: The marbles are the main attraction of the British
12	museum. The British museum has little to show bar the Greek marbles and the
13	exhibits of other civilizations, like the Egyptian. The British wants the marbles
14	simply because they gain profit from them. It's all about money for them.

Excerpt 8.2.